

1882

Hosmer, (Mrs.) Ann P

Jan. 11

Reminiscences of sanitary work and incidents
connected with the war for the union, recorded
at the request of my husband, and inscribed
to my dear children by their mother.

A.M.S. 66 p. 21 1/2 x 17 1/2 cm.

Volumes,

Hosmer, (Mrs) Ann P.

Gift of Mrs. Max N. Koven

Dec. 20, 1929

SOURCE:

From the Chicago Historical Society

...discomfort and some risk. On our route we saw terrible effects of the War, ^{1a}
whole towns were devastated, the Rebel bullets showing their mark on many
handsome dwellings, and it seemed like the "reign of Terror"--Morgan and his
men committed vile deprivations, and the only method the inhabitants used, to
preserve their corn, and other products of the soil, was to store what they
could in their garrets and in many instances in their sleeping apartments.
We found it literally so, as the room we occupied one night enroute, was
filled nearly to the bed we slept---upon with corn, or--I may rather say on
what we rested our weary limbs, after the long drive through the woods and by
paths, the Turpike being unsafe, as the Bushwackers were around constantly.
From this place, we proceeded by rail to Nashville. We remained two days
visiting Hospitals, and succeeded in finding several of the men belonging to ^{1b}
the Board of Trade regiments, wounded, and requiring some care from us, we
attended to their wounds then hastened to perform our mission to Murfreesboro.
Fortunately we met a young officer Capt. Hunt---who aided us much paying unasked
attentions by procuring for us a guard as the roads were too unsafe to venture
without being molested, also a Cavalry escort who were with the Army. Wagons
which covered eight miles of the Pike, the whole distance being 27 miles which
was one scene of devastation, even graveyards torn up, fences and large trees
laid low, the fields and portions of the road strewn with dead horses and mules
beside the debris generally of burnt wagons dc. We visited several elegant
mansions deserted by their owners undoubtedly in haste as nothing had been
removed. In these houses our wounded soldiers had been placed and were being
cared for. We said kind words to the sufferers and as far as we could, ^{2a}
administered to their wants substantially. We visited one Camp half a mile
from the scene of action in the sixth division, that battle took place
before they crossed the River to Murfreesboro, we found some terrible cases, a

much greater number of limbs amputated, than any Hospital we then had ever ~~visited~~ 2a
visited. They were cheerful and resigned, noble and brave men. Oh how glad
they were to have no talk with them, the only ladies that had been to cheer
them. When we reached Murfreesboro, the question arose where shall we go,
the day was far advanced and we, having traveled all day, and amidst such
exciting scenes, needed rest. Capt. Hunt who had been so very kind, said he
would find us quarters, our ambulance was standing in the middle of the road,
and before the Capt. could make the necessary inquiry, the Medical director and 2b
Hospital Inspector, Dr. McDermont, made his appearance, and coming to the ~~ambulance~~
ambulance where we were seated, inquiring our wants, as soon as he found we
came to aid our suffering Soldiers, he kindly relieved Capt. Hunt and took us
in charge. He found a comfortable house, the inmates evidently secech, both
they dared not refuse, so the Surgeon knew their proclivities and of course
they wished to keep on the right side of the then winning party. We had a
comfortable room, and tolerably good bed, but the food prepared for us, was
simply horrid. In the morning we started on our errand of mercy. I cannot
describe the scenes we went through indelibly imprinted as they are on my
memory many are too heart rending to put upon paper, these scenes were our
first insight in wounded cases where we found it

3a
actively engaged in, and some amputations, where it was necessary for us to ~~ass~~
assist--so few to help, and so many suffering and dying. The Medical Director
and the Surgeons in general aided us in every way, made our path clear, and
we were installed at once, and given entire charge of the various Hospitals,
as regarded their diet. We soon found a suitable room in a central location
and had it fitted up with cooking utensils, and drawing Army rations,
were enabled at once to make soup, toast, and apple sauce adtibitum. I need
hardly say that we worked unceasingly being literally our own servants, and

as we only had a black boy to assist us, our labor in the kitchen was intense. working harder than any hired servant--I ever had in my house at home. The amount of food we daily prepared seems to me now incredible, we thought nothing of twenty loaves of bread cut and made into toast at one time and we daily made up a barrel of dried apples into sauce and these were sent to the Hospitals in large pails, several of the gentlemen belonging to the Christian Commission from Milwaukie and Chicago helped us in that way, as it was impossible for us to go in person. We made Eggnog and milk punch for the Erysipelas and Gangrene Hospitals, indeed we prepared most of the nourishing food for these patients. We visited in person these Hospitals once during the day and I can only say not an idle movement was passed. In one Hospital where the Rebel Soldiers were, attended by the Confederate Surgeons we were shocked by their brutality, their dead were left in the Hall behind a curtain, waiting for the Federals to take them away and bury them, the odor was terrible, and we took occasion to complain to the Provost Marshal of the fact, which they attended to at once, compelling the Confederates to bury their own dead. We went in one particularly to find an Illinois Soldier whom we heard was in that Hospital. Having been wounded and a prisoner before Murfreesboro was retaken, and this poor fellow was neglected and cruelly treated. We succeeded in getting him away, going ourselves, for a litter and men to carry him to our Hospital where he was kindly attended to, but alas it was too late to save his life and he died in a few days, but not until he was enabled to make his will, and putting his trust in God, dying full of hope and joy inexpressible. that he could have the consolation of knowing letters had been written to his friends, and kind words said to him. Poor fellow, I never can forget his look when he took my hand and kissed it thanking me for his happiness, and the kind friends about him. Many similar instances took place which repaid us for all the toil and discomforts of our sojourn in

Murfreesboro, There is one instance, I wont give a place here, for it was a peculiar case. One of the Hospital Surgeons came to me one day and said, I have a very interesting case under my care, and I want you to interest yourself in the young man", I said promptly command me where I am needed. He said "not to day, as I have to make a second amputation, to take his leg off above the knee, and he is very nervous indeed in a critical condition." The Dr. called for me the next day and I went to the Hospital with my hands full of such nourishing food as was required in his case. I passed through the ward and came nearly in front of him, when I stopped and had to cry and compose myself for as he lay half reclining on his cot, I really thought I saw my own dear son James, the likeness was most striking, the same dark hair worn as he always did and the same dark eyes, all so like my boy but I passed to his bedside, and as he caught a glimpse of me he put his hands to his eyes, and looking at me again said "oh I thought you was my Mother". I could not keep my tears back and I told him he looked like a son of mine. This poor fellow was the son of a gentleman, and belonged to the regular Army, he was a Sargeant (his name 'Rensoleu'? Falls) I think, in the 16th a new Ret (regiment)formed since the war commenced. All the good nursing and medical skill, could not save his life, he died in about three weeks. I took charge of his money and papers and with a lock of his shining dark hair, I sent to his Mother writing her several times before his death and afterwords giving her all the particulars. We found it impossible to remain at our boarding place, the house we first went to, and as we were paying high prices for a very poor return, we accepted an offer made us by an old friend who was on Genl (General) Rosecrans staff, and went to Head Quarters to make our home while on duty. This was a very pleasant change as the Officers generally were tof the Regular Army, and highly polished gentlemen. Our evenings were pleas

5a

5b

pleasantly passed, that is to say if we had any strenght to sit up after our hard days work. (flirtations) We received marked attentions from every one and the band employed at Head Quarters serendaded us almost every night, and a Pennsylvania Regiment stationed at Murfreesboro, had a delightful Quartetta Club who came frequently to sing at our window. Those were happy times, concious of having done much good during the day not sparing ourselves, and the great satisfaction of knowing our sacrifices and labors were appreciated. That hard, hard bed we laid our weary limbs upon, could it speak, would testify how repaid we were with the full assurance of having performed a great duty and our nightly prayer was, that we might be sustained and kept from illnes to do all our hands found to do.

Our stay continued in Murfreesboro eleven weeks, and being nearly worn out by fatigue and poor diet, we thought best to leave the Hospitals were thinned out, both by deaths and convalescents and we could be spared, although the patients were very unwilling to have us leave, the medical Director, said we needed rest, and unless we could soon get it, might prove bad for us. We procured transportation and returned home, there to commence a series of labors hardly equaled in Hospitals at the front. One Soldier's Home required much attention, and unremitting labor. We had in connection with the Home, the "Soldiers Rest" situated in the Lake Shire, where Soldiers in transition made their daily stops to be fed, and often to be provided with rations needed on their way. I worked daily at the Rest, and from three to five times during the week all night. Would that I had the statistics of that grand Charity and could say exactly or -- approximate near to the number daily fed at this noble Institution.

Many ladies of refinement and position, worked daily, there and I can